

Dec. 13, 2002 -- Taxpayer supports Third Wave

To the editor,

I read the Missile Ranger often, and lately have seen many articles on the "Third Wave." Some of the articles and comments I have read greatly concern me as a taxpayer. I have some knowledge of how this post operates, and its mission. Its mission is obviously a very important one. I guess this is what disturbs me the most about what I have read. There have been very negative feedbacks in the Missile Ranger about the "Third Wave," and a great lack of fiscal understanding or objective talk on the situation. The articles tend to make the initiative out as something either bad or incorrect for this post. I argue that it is the opposite. I say this from the perspective of a commercial sector employee and taxpayer.

Some of the articles I have read have stated that it is more expensive for the government to hire a contractor to come and do the job that civil service performs at this point. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This is true for many reasons. First, when you hire a contractor, their contract money covers such things as manpower, training and employee benefits (i.e. medical, retirement). If you had a civil service employee instead of the contractor, these costs must then be added to the person's salary. Therefore you cannot say "A contractor will cost x, and we only pay x for civil service salary's." You must add the cost of training, retirement, medical, time off that would not be afforded to contract employees as a work time charge (i.e. organizational day, etc.) and salary all together. If you evaluated these numbers honestly, you would find that contractors would not only be cheaper, but over time, that savings would increase as opposed to having civil service in those positions which would in turn increase costs for the government at a compounded rate due to retirements.

The disturbing part of this whole anti-third waveism is the fact that WSMR's mission is so very important, and anything that can be done to cut costs should be supported. This gives our nation more money to spend on the subject matter of our nation, whether that is new missile development, feeding the hungry or insuring (sic) our elderly a future income. There was an article in the Dec. 6 issue in which you stated that Gen. Engel had pledged his support in retaining the civil service positions at WSMR, it is my supreme hope that Gen. Engel does in fact support those position which do not save the government money by outsourcing to contractors. However, such a blanket statement only encourages me to be more active in politics, as the content of the "Third Wave" message seems to be lost on the leadership of WSMR if such a measurement is to be made from the articles posted in the Missile Ranger.

In conclusion, the Third Wave is about saving the government, and in turn the taxpayer money, while increasing the results of money spent. No one likes losing their job, I have been through corporate cutbacks myself and it is hard on a person. This however should not be an issue of personal politics, but what is right for the nation. And if money can be conserved, or better spent, it should be. Personal sentiment of keeping ones job should take a back seat to the greater good. I am sure some of the contractors moving in will need qualified individuals to staff the contract on WSMR, if you feel you are a good worker, then try applying for a job with the contracted company. Tactics to hinder the

“Third Wave” however should be evaluated with serious concern, because in the end you pay taxes too.

Concerned,
Heather Keese

Editor’s note: During an A-76 Commercial Activities Study conducted at White Sands Missile Range from April 23, 1997, through April 9, 1999, 23 areas were reviewed. Of those 23 areas, one was determined to be governmental in nature, five areas were eliminated from the study and the 17 remaining areas were retained in-house by the government employees. Under the Circular A-76 process, the government bid includes salaries plus added percentages to cover retirement (24 percent of base payroll), insurance (5.7 and 1.45 percent) and miscellaneous fringe benefits (1.7 percent).